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GREEK ARCHAEOLOGY.

BY

AUSTIN S. GARVER.

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FROM PROCEEDINGS OF THE AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY, AT THE
SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING HELD IN BOSTON, APRIL 30, 1902.

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GREEK ARCHAEOLOGY.

THERE is a very real sense in which Greece is the native land of us all; for we are re-born there consciously or unconsciously, before we truly live. The mind that has been touched by Homer, or Plato, or Pindar, or Phidias has a feeling of home for the land in which they lived. All its interests have a peculiar hold upon us, appealing as they do to the affections as well as to the imagination.

A residence of two months in Athens, although it be enriched by association with the American School there, and supplemented by excursions in the vicinity, and in the Peloponnesus as far as Sparta, does not entitle one to speak with authority upon archaeological subjects, but it gives one many new and profound impressions of the country and its people. The companionable size of Greece, the beauty of its scenery, in which mountain, sea and plain conspire together, the indescribable brilliancy of its atmosphere, the thrilling character of the associations in which every scene is rich, the vividness of ancient traditions, the fresh vitality of the modern spirit, the simplicity, dignity and graciousness of much of the life of the people today, all unite to make a visit to Greece one of the memorable experiences of life.

It is a marvel that the Greeks have survived at all; greater marvel still that they have come through all the centuries of oppression and misery with the best traditions of the past so strong, and with so much that is gentle and unspoiled in private character. And this fresh, new national life is showing itself in many interesting ways.

The city of Athens is itself a good illustration. It is as modern as any western capital; the visitor can lodge as well there as in Paris, he finds all the conveniences of travel and residence to which he is accustomed, and this year he will be able to ride in an electric car to the summer resort on the bay of Phaleron. The city has characteristics more truly its own. The cleanness of its streets, the sober dignity of its houses, the severe elegance of the costlier architecture, the cataracts of roses that in May roll out over the walls along the street, show how strong the love of beauty still is. The fine new buildings for the Academy, the Polytechnic, the National Museum, as well as those for schools and gymnasiums, which have all been erected at the expense of private individuals, are the evidence that the public spirit and the noble national pride which have marked the race are not extinct. We know how intense was the attachment of the ancient Athenian to his native city; something of that same love still lingers there, giving to the city, new as it is, a feeling and flavor of age, so that what else would be too modern seems to be seasoned with antiquity.

Besides, the ancient world lives side by side with the modern; it lives in the speech of the people, so that if you call a cab on the street, you use Homer's word for carriage; it lives in the names which parents give their children; it lives in the great temples and other monuments which still exist; and above all it lives in the fragments which have been long buried in the earth, and which in the last thirty years the spade of the archaeologist has brought to light.

The charm which the traveller feels in Greece is largely due to this blending of the old and the new in all his impressions. In no other country do the antiquities so connect themselves with the life of to-day. In no other country is there a more general interest and veneration for the past, a greater eagerness to search for every possible

trace of it that may still exist, or a more scrupulous care to preserve every vestige of its life. This interest was shown as long ago as 1858 in the founding of the Greek Archaeological Society. From that time dates a new era in Greek studies, though it was still many years before important work was done. The Greeks were too poor to bear the cost of unearthing the sites of cities and temples; they were too jealous to allow the work to be done by others. They were wise enough to recognize the necessity of aid from outside, and gradually, concessions were granted for the coöperation of foreign scholars. This wider interest is shown in the establishment in Athens of the various national schools of archaeology. First was the French, dating from near the middle of the last century; then came the German in 1874, the American in 1882, and the British in 1886.

Moreover it was some time before the scope and method of the new science of archaeology were determined, or before it obtained recognition as a science at all. Scholars who had been bred in the literary traditions, and who relied on the classic authors as the sources for the history, were inclined to scorn the pretensions of the humble ally, coming with shovel and wheelbarrow. When Schliemann began his excavations at Hissarlik in 1871, and when a few years later he reported the results of his labors there and at Mycenæ, he was ridiculed as an enthusiast, which he certainly was, and as an impractical dreamer, which he certainly was not. His conclusions have been revised, but his patient, systematic method showed the way for all who came after him. His example and success made it easier to persuade the German Government to appropriate large sums of money for the excavations at Olympia, and before that work was completed in 1881, scientific journals, for the purpose of recording and discussing the results obtained in the whole field of Greek archaeology, were established in nearly every civilized land. The "Journal of

Hellenic Studies," one the most valuable of these publications, begun in 1880, attests the great interest the new science had excited among British and American scholars. Year by year the work has been carried forward, until now most of the important sites have been uncovered. Each year vast and revolutionary additions have been made to the sum of knowledge.

It is not my purpose in this brief paper to describe the progress or the achievements of the science of archaeology, or to tell, as would be most gratifying, of the efficient and prominent part taken by our American school. I am concerned only with a few broad features which show how much the world is indebted to this newest of the sciences. The least of its services is the new light which it has thrown upon many a disputed point in classic history. The literary evidence alone is often conflicting and always meagre, and it has happened frequently that the discovery of a tablet, or inscription, or coin, has set at rest some question of place or date. A striking instance is furnished by the excavations at Ægina during the past year. It had been taken for granted that the temple there was erected in honor of Athena, because the central figure in one of the pediment groups was the statue of that goddess. In the spring of 1901, a few German scholars determined to make a more thorough examination of the site. Every handful of earth down to the solid rock was carefully sifted, and while no great finds were made, new material of extraordinary importance for the history of Ægina and of Greek civilization was discovered: among other things an inscription which proved that the temple belonged not to Athena, but to a local deity, Aphæa, and with the settlement of that question there came a fresh glimpse of the nature of Greek religion.

So it is that archaeology brings back what had been utterly lost. Let me remind you of another example. For centuries no one knew where to look for one of the most

ancient and venerated spots in Greece,—the dwelling of the spirit which, speaking through the leaves of the sacred oak, had guided half the world. The site of Dodona and its sanctuary of Zeus, had long been a subject of hopeless speculation. Colonel Leake, the English traveller, in 1835 lamented that all trace of it was lost beyond recovery. Every effort to locate it was fruitless. At last, about 1877, the finding of a large number of oracle inscriptions with dedications to Zeus, set the matter finally at rest.

But beyond the useful task of elucidation and verification, archaeological studies have immensely expanded our knowledge; they have opened into regions quite unknown before; the whole field of Greek history has been illuminated and widened, and a closer acquaintance with the manners and customs of the people has been made possible. Professor Gardner of Oxford has published a large volume with the significant title, "*New Chapters in Greek History.*" Every work on sculpture written twenty years ago would need to have large sections of wholly new material added to it, to bring it up to date; while the excavations now in progress in Crete, taken in connection with others made elsewhere, are furnishing the data for the reconstruction in great detail of a prehistoric Mycenaean civilization, which has hitherto been dim and mythical. From bits of pottery, coins and ornaments, from the wide distribution of similar objects all round the Mediterranean, from the evidences of wealth and architecture and commerce, has been constructed bit by bit the life of a mighty people, long antecedent to the historic Greeks. So great and revolutionary have been the results, that all Greek history has had to be rewritten from these new sources. Grote, for instance, who completed his monumental work in 1856, has a single reference to Mycenæ. All that he says of it is that it was the seat of a mythical race of kings. Since then Mycenæ has yielded up its secrets. Schliemann

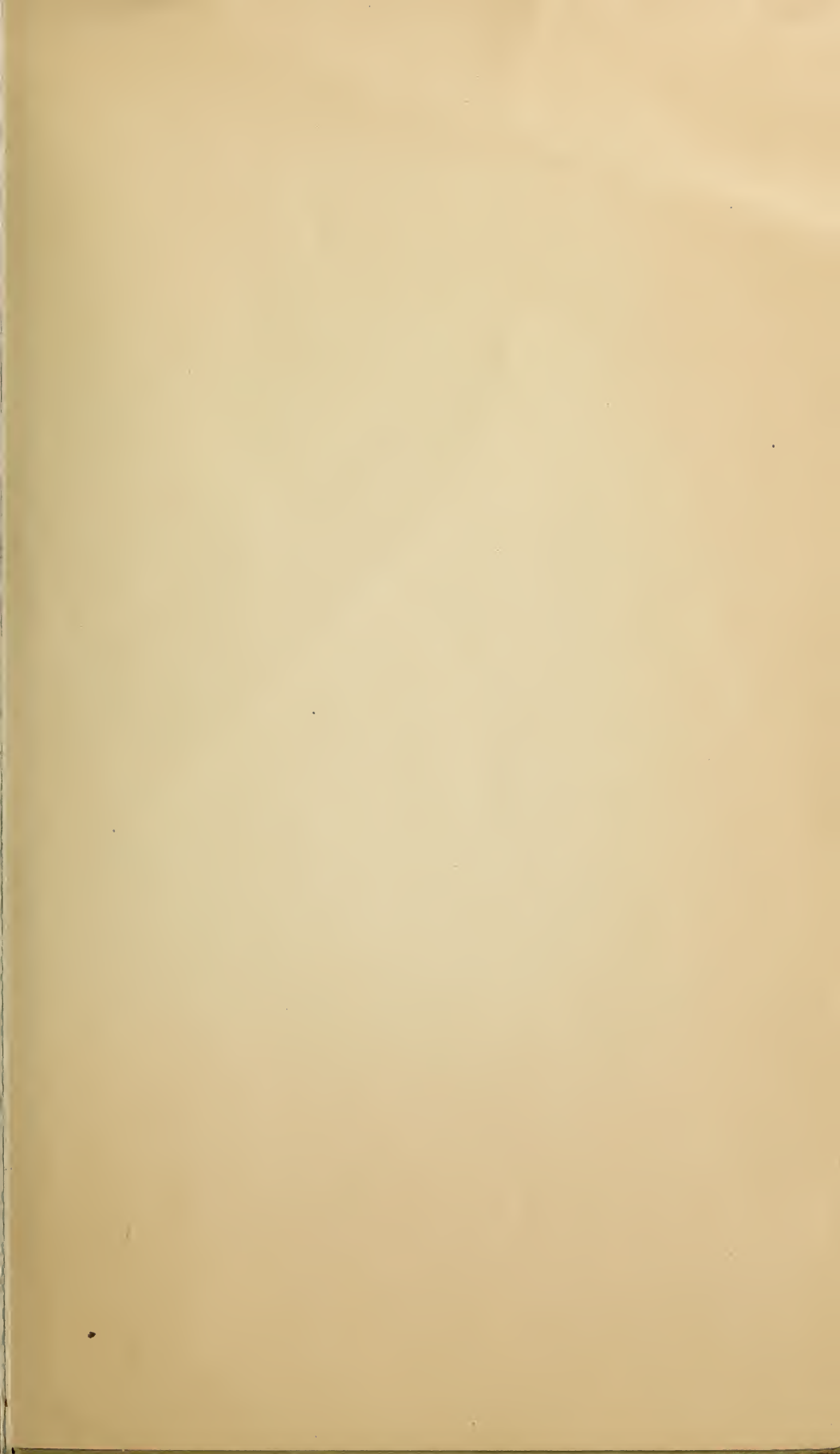
discovered the graves of its heroes, whose treasures are one of the glories of the incomparable museum at Athens; and more recently, the palace of these mighty kings of prehistoric days has been brought to light on the Acropolis of Mycenæ, telling much of the splendor in which they lived; and more recently still, as I have said, abundant traces of this ancient civilization have been found on the coasts and islands of the Mediterranean.

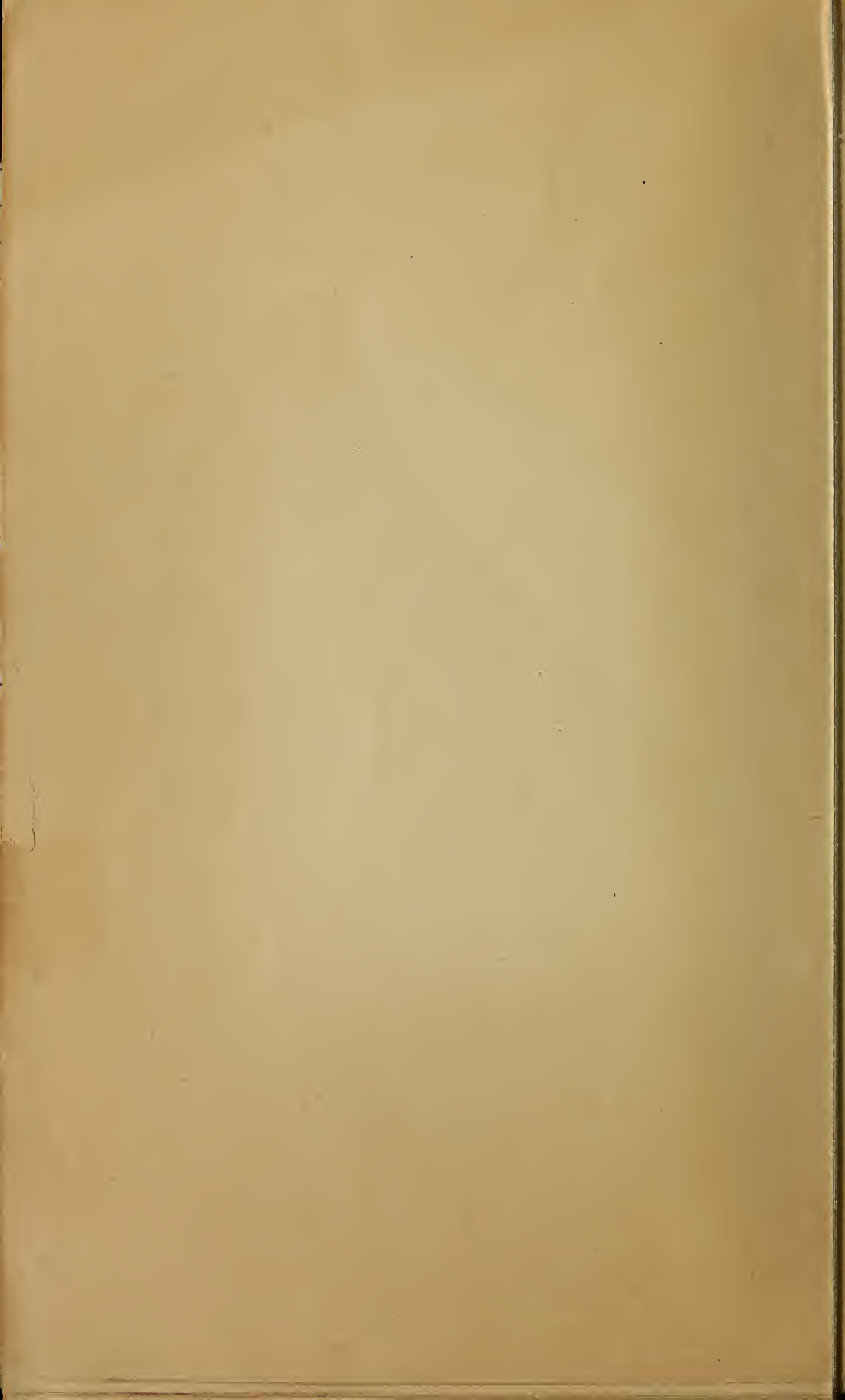
But the greatest service which archaeology renders to the ordinary student is its aid to the imagination. It touches the senses and through them wakes the spirit. To read a description of a scene from a book is one thing, to behold it with your eyes is another. I have still a leap of the heart when I recall the view from the top of Hymettus, one of the most thrilling views in the world. To the east was the strait separating the mainland from Eubœa, while the islands extended far along the horizon in an ever fainter line. To the south was the narrow mountainous promontory of Sunium, with its gleaming temple; beyond was the wide sweep of the deep blue waters of the Saronic gulf, with Ægina and Salamis in their midst; almost within reach were the Piræus and the curved beach of Phaleron. To the southwest, range behind range rose the headlands and mountains of the Peloponnesus, the higher summits covered with snow. To the west, the snowy back of Parnassus was lifted to the sky, the most imposing of the mountains that circled around to the north. And there, hemmed in by this mountain wall, in this most majestic, and most lovely setting, was the little Attic plain, with the city and acropolis in its centre. That was the day I saw Greece, and it was an impression such as could never be obtained from books.

So it is with the history. It is by contact with the real objects with which it deals that it gains a wonderful vividness and reality. When we take in our hands the very things which the ancients handled, the utensils they made

and used, the ornaments they wore; when we see their cups and swords and gems; when we note their burial customs, in which painted vase and sculptured relief reveal the thought of the living for the dead,—we are brought near to them, and seem to share the thoughts of which these objects are but the symbols. Greek life was the most objective of lives, and Greek archaeology by discovering the actual objects, has aided in restoring the most characteristic pictures of that life. High as is its service to science in increasing knowledge, it is to be honored yet more for its service to humanity in making that old life live again, and thus helping us recognize the "hills where our life rose" from which health still comes. For one might say of Greece itself what a Roman poet of the time of Augustus said of Eleusis: "Though thy life be fixed in one place, and thou neither sailest the sea, nor treadest the paths of the dry land, go at least to Eleusis, that thou mayest see those great mights, sacred to Demeter, through which thou shalt keep thy soul serene among the living, and go to join the great host with a lighter heart."







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